

The Pledge of Allegiance
By Lucille J Goodyear

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

This pledge has its special place in American history. It was first published in a magazine called *The Youth's Companion* on September 8, 1892. The words belong to the schoolchildren of the United States. The pledge is part of their heritage as Americans. It was first written for schoolchildren, and it was first recited by schoolchildren.

The writer of these special words was Francis Bellamy, a writer and editor for *The Youth's Companion* and an ordained Baptist minister. He and James B. Upham, another editor of the magazine, wanted to help youngsters feel proud of their country.

In 1892 the two men worked together to promote a national celebration for the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America. Upham thought a flag should wave in front of every school building and another flag should hang in every classroom. Francis Bellamy worked on the words for a pledge to the flag.

When the two men finished their work, the magazine printed both the pledge and suggested ways to honor the flag. Their ideas were accepted eagerly. Teachers and children used the plans and the pledge in special programs for Columbus Day in October of 1892.

Francis Bellamy visited President Benjamin Harrison to ask for his support. The President issued an act saying, in part, “Let the national flag float over every schoolhouse in the country.”

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in Chicago, at the World's Fair. This brought more attention to the pledge.

The original words were changed a little by the First and Second National Flag Conferences in 1923 and 1924. On December 28, 1945, the United States Congress recognized the words as the “Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.” In 1954, on Flag Day---June 14, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed House Joint Resolution Number 243 into law. The law called for another change in the wording. The words *under God* were added to the pledge.

As he signed the bill, President Eisenhower said, “In this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons, which forever will be our country's most powerful resource.”

When Americans say the Pledge of Allegiance, they promise from the heart to obey the laws of the nation. They promise to be loyal to the ideals of their country. The words are a challenge. The pledge reminds Americans of their duty to make sure that the nation offers “liberty for all.”